

Competencies and Strategies for the Teaching of 21st Century Learners in Vocational Home Economics Education

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Abstract

Vocational Home Economics is a skill oriented field of study which equipped the learners with saleable skills that make them self reliance/self employed. To equip the learners, the teacher must also be equipped with competent strategies for effective teaching and learning. The paper looks at Home Economics Education as a Vocation and discussed some effective strategies every teacher should use for teaching. The paper recommends that learners should adapt to change and develop initiative and self direction, while the Home Economics teachers should reposition their teaching strategies for effective teaching and learning in the 21st century.

1. Introduction

Vocational education is an organized educational programmes which directly relates to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment, or for additional preparation for a career that does not require a Bachelors Degree (Ogundipe 2012). Vocational education deals with preparation of persons for entry into recognized occupations and it is offered at the secondary level and post secondary levels. Its training prepares the learners for careers that are based in manual or practical activities.

Vocational education is traditionally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation. Vocational education also takes care of upgrading skills or potentials of individuals as well as retraining of workers for paid or unpaid employment. It is therefore a type of education designed to develop occupational skills.

Vocational and technical education as defined in the National Policy of Education is the aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life (FRN, 2004). Burt in Ekpenyong (2008) viewed vocational and technical education as an educational programme that deals specifically on an organized and systematic manner with the acquisition of skills, understandings, attitudes and abilities that are necessary for entry into and successful progress within specific occupation or job family. Khaleel (2012) in her perspective viewed the issue of vocational and technical education as an organized form of education because it has a curriculum, it is systematic because it follows different stages, it is comprehensive because it is concerned with the total development of man since it offers skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for success in the world of work and life generally. What makes vocational and technical education distinct from other forms of education is the fact that it prepares the individual for entry into viable employment in addition to providing him with the necessary skills and knowledge to adapt to the changing needs and challenges of the world of work.

Ekpenyong (2008) identified Home Economics Education, Agricultural Education, Business Education, Industrial Education, Technical Education, and Health Occupations Education as the key occupational areas of vocational and technical education. This paper will focus on vocational Home

Economics Education.

2. Home Economics Education

Home Economics Education is that educational process which prepares man for successful family and community living. It is a form of education that impacts in man all round successful development. This is aimed at improving man's quality of life (Khaleel, 2012). According to International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE, 1988),

"Home Economics is both the body of theoretical knowledge based on exact science and humanities and forms of practice, backed up by appropriate technologies. Its area of activity is the development, use and management of human and material resources for the greater welfare of individuals, families and human society in its entirety".

From the above, Home Economics is that field of study which utilizes both knowledge and practices drawn from various disciplines, sciences, arts, and humanities to manage human and material resources in order to improve man's quality of life.

Lemchi (2001) viewed Home Economics as a skill oriented field of study, is noted for its capability of equipping learners with saleable skills that make for self reliance/self employment. Ogbene (2006) viewed Home Economics as an aspect of vocational education that deals with knowledge, skills, competences, and aptitude that fits one wholly, and entirely for work or business.

Khaleel (2012) viewed Home Economics education in developing the individual in totality:

- It improves the individuals quality of life.
- It empowers the individual with knowledge and skills for gainful employment.
- It equips the individual with life skills necessary for everyone family and community living.
- It develops the individual with a creative mind to play entrepreneurial roles.
- It equips the individual with the ability to manage both human and material resources.
- It offers the individuals the opportunity to expand their options by preparing them for several jobs in the world of work.

3. Strategies for the Teaching of 21st Century Learners

Researchers at Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) have identified nine instructional strategies that are most likely to improve student achievement across all grade areas and across all grade levels. The nine strategies are as follows:

1. Identifying similarities and differences.
 2. Summarizing and note taking
 3. Reinforcing effects and providing recognition.
 4. Homework and practice
 5. Nonlinguistic representations
 6. Cooperative learning
 7. Setting objectives and providing feedback
 8. Generating and testing hypotheses
 9. Cues, Questions and Advanced Organizers
- In identifying similarities and differences, the ability to break a concept into similar and dissimilar characteristics allows students to understand (and often solve) complex problems by analyzing them in a more simple way. Teachers can either directly present similarities and differences, accompanied by deep discussion and inquiry or simply ask student to identify similarities and difference on their own, while teacher directed activities focus on identifying specific items. Student directed activities encourage variation and

broaden, understanding.

- In summarizing and note taking, these skills promote greater comprehension by asking students to analyse a subject to expose what is essential and then put it in their own words. This requires substituting, deleting and keeping some things and having an awareness of the basic structure of the information presented.
- In reinforcing effort and providing recognition, efforts and recognition speak to the attitudes and belief of students and teachers must show the connection between effort and achievement. Although not all students realize the importance of effort, they can learn to change their beliefs to emphasize efforts. Recognition however, is most effective if it is contingent on the achievement of a certain standard. Also, symbolic recognition works better than tangible rewards.
- Homework and practice provides students with the opportunity to extend their learning outside the classroom. The amount of home work assigned should vary by grade level and that parent involvement should be minimal. Teachers should explain the purpose of homework to both the student and the parent or guardian and teachers should try to give feedback on all homework assigned. The students should adapt skills while they are learning them. Speed and accuracy are key indicators of the effectiveness of practice.
- In nonlinguistic representation, the knowledge is stored in two forms, linguistic and visual. The more students use both forms in the classroom, the more opportunity they have to achieve. The use of nonlinguistic representation stimulate and increase brain activity.
- Cooperative learning. In organizing students into cooperative groups yields a positive effort on overall learning. When applying cooperative learning strategies, keep groups small and do not over use this strategy be systematic and consistent in your approach.
- Setting objectives and providing feedback. This provides the students with a direction for their learning. Goals should not be too specific, they should be easily adaptable to students' own objectives. Feedback generally produces positive results. Teachers can never give too much, however, they should manage the form that feedback takes.
- Generating and testing hypotheses. Deductive approach to this strategy works best. Whether a hypothesis is induced or deduced, students should clearly explain their hypothesis and conclusions.
- Cues, Questions and Advanced Organizers. These help students use what they already know about a topic to enhance familiar learning. These tools should be highly analytical, should focus on what is important and are most effective when prevented before a learning experience.

4. Conclusion

Effective strategies for teaching should be used by all teachers for all grade levels and particularly Home Economic teachers who are impacting saleable skills to younger generations. The learners of the 21st century should however recognize that today's life and work environment require far more their thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate he complex life and work environment in the globally competitive information age required student to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for this work:

1. The learners should adapt to change. Changes in varied roles, job responsibilities, schedules and context. They should work effectively in change ambiguity and changing priorities.
2. Learners should be flexible to incorporate feedback effectively, and understand, negotiate

- and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions particularly in multi-cultural environment.
3. Learners should develop initiative and self-direction to manage their goals and time wisely. They should utilize time and manage work load effectively.
 4. Learners should independently and be self-directed learners. They should go beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand ones own learning and opportunities to gain expertise. Also to demonstrate commitment to learning as a lifelong process.
 5. The teachers should be committed to impacting knowledge and using various strategies in teaching. The teachers should be versatile in their knowledge, and explore various styles for effective teaching and learning.
 6. The governments at all levels should provide adequate funding and infrastructure for education.
 7. Home Economics professionals should reposition their instructional strategies to make home economics more attractive to the world of work.

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